



State of Arizona
Department of Education

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MEMORANDUM

TO: National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Sponsors

FROM: Mary Szafranski, Deputy Associate Superintendent
Arizona Department of Education, Health & Nutrition Services

Cara Peczkowski, Director
Arizona Department of Education, School Nutrition Programs

DATE: November 10, 2011

RE: Direct Certification and Zero Benefit Households

Original Signed

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance to School Food Authorities (SFAs) on direct certification and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households eligible for “zero benefits.” Children in households receiving benefits from SNAP are categorically eligible for free meals in the Child Nutrition Programs. However, under some circumstances, SNAP households may be eligible for “zero benefits.” Section 9(b)(12)(A)(i) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act restricts categorical eligibility for free school meals based on SNAP participation to children who are members of a household receiving assistance under SNAP. Therefore, a child who is a member of a household that is receiving “zero benefits” from SNAP is not categorically eligible for free meals, unless the child is categorically eligible for another reason.

The Department of Economic Security (DES) may issue a “zero benefit” letter to the individual SNAP households. In the event that a SFA receives a DES “zero benefit” letter from a household, this letter may not be accepted for certification purposes. In these situations, the child’s eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals must be determined by a household application or information from an appropriate source that establishes categorical eligibility for other reasons.

For questions regarding this memorandum, please contact your School Nutrition Programs Specialist at (602) 542-8700.

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